



Volume 12, Issue 2

March 2012

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world." James 1:27



Dear Friends,

I returned to Guatemala after spending six months in the U.S. on reverse mission, and to recuperate from some health problems related to my feet and lower legs. I am still unable to walk long distances or stand for long periods, but God is slowly healing me. Traveling is still a challenge and I need assistance to do so.

On February 2nd, Jose Luis met me in Playa Grande lugging the two 50 lb. suitcases from the top of the mini-van to the four-wheel-drive pickup headed for Santiago Ixcán. In Santiago, Javier waited at the side of the road to meet us with Gitana, my mule. I rode my four-legged "taxi" 15 minutes home to Casa San Santiago (St. James mission house).

At the house Javier, Jose Luis, neighbors and I rested outside sipping lemonade on the west patio. Jose Luis noticed that a small tree hugging the house was dead.

"That tree needs to be cut down before it falls on one of the children playing here," he observed. "Let's do it now," they agreed.

Without further ado, Jose Luis borrowed the neighbor's axe and with expert precision cut into the base of the rotting wood. Within minutes the tree crashed, guided as if by an invisible hand, to an area of the yard free of people, animals and other growing things.

The men then drug the felled tree a few feet placing it adjacent to the path running from the patio to the chicken coop. At this writing it lays there still waiting for the day one of the men cuts it into firewood or it transforms into compost... and I think the latter is most likely what will happen.

In any case, I didn't think any more about the tree until I walked out of the kitchen door one morning to join the women jewelers gathered outside on the patio for a meeting. Glancing toward the tree, I stopped in my tracks. There, to my surprise, cradled between the fork of the dead tree was a splash of brilliant yellow! The unassuming green leafage with its root system intertwined in the dead branches had blossomed into a bouquet of delicate yellow flowers, possibly miniature orchids!

“I didn’t know there were flowers there!” I said to the women.” They were there all along, you just didn’t notice,” the women casually replied.



No, I didn’t notice that the dead tree still had life and beauty intertwined in its stark, dead branches, just we don’t always notice the beauty of new life sprouting from the Lenten branches of our own pruned lives. **“Surprised by resurrection!”** I thought.

While in the U.S., I was unaware that the people here were facing an economic crisis greater than their usual hardship. You see, in addition to growing corn and beans for food, the Ixcan people grow and/or pick cardamom, a green pod exported as spice and perfume. It is their main source of income. The price of cardamom plummeted suddenly from a whopping high of Q10.00 (quetzals) per lb. last year to Q2.00 - Q3.00 per lb. this year. Everyone is hurting! Since my arrival, I have had more people come to me in tears, asking for help, than I can remember in many years. The needs vary from baby formula, to medicine, education assistance to housing.

But one need has been especially dire. She (I’ll call her Maria) came to me bedraggled, dirty and thin as a rail with her infant daughter snugly wrapped on her back in traditional Mayan form. She had been in the fields picking cardamom all day. Her six-year-old daughter, four year old twin daughters, eighteen-month-old son remained at home--alone.

The man she has lived with who is the father of their five children left them two months prior to “look for work in Mexico.” But after various phone conversations Maria realized that she and her five children had been abandoned!

“Alli Ud. A ver que vas a hacer con los hijos,” he informed her. (It’s up to you. You figure out what you are going to do with the children). Now Maria carries the burden of raising her five young children all by herself. Alone!

I fed her and gave her enough money to buy 100 lbs. of corn with which she will make tortillas to feed her children.

“We will help you, Maria,” I said before she left.

“Quiero mi oracion contigo,” (I am praying for you), she responded. We set a date to meet at my home for prayer.

Maria’s older sister had advised her to, “Get on your knees and cry out to God.” She had been doing so in the evenings in her home.

A week later we met in the mission house chapel. We spent 40 minutes praying together, sometimes silently and sometimes with cries and pleas to God for forgiveness, mercy and help. After our prayer time, I mobilized.

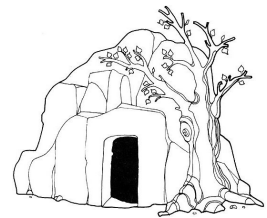
The following Sunday afternoon Maria, her two older sisters, two trusted friends and I met to listen and discern ways we could help. Maria and her sisters told me of abuse and neglect by the father of her children.

Where is the Resurrection in all this pain and destitution?

The answer came from Maria herself. When I asked her during our meeting, “What do you need most right now, Maria?” her response wasn’t food, medicine or clothing. Her response was, “I want to return to my church along with my children.”

Maria had left the church years ago when she decided to live with her children’s father. Now abandoned, desperate, and alone, she saw that her family’s spiritual need was even greater than their physical needs. In the dead branches of her present crisis bloomed a hint of new life. In her physical abandonment, God was drawing her to Himself, and in the Lord’s arms Maria and her children will never again experience abandonment.

Surprised, once again, by Resurrection!



The saying, “It takes a village,” is true. We came up with a plan that day in solidarity with Maria and her extended family, a nurse with the local health clinic, and Ixcàn Ministries. We will walk with Maria as long as it takes to get her back on her feet and self-sufficient.

I’m keeping my eyes open in these Lenten days, in the struggles and pain of my life and in the lives of others for signs of New Life. They are there. Keep your eyes open and you too, may be surprised by Resurrection!

P.S. Just a few days ago as I walked out my kitchen door I found Eliandro and Griselda playing in the dead branches of the fallen tree. Griselda shouted, “Look Hermana Katy, look at my flower!”

In her tiny hand she held a wild red rose. I smiled. There's a message here for me, I thought. I'm still pondering it...



May these Lenten days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving bring forth New Life and Easter Resurrections for you and your family.

Thank you for your continued support of Ixcán Ministries! May God bless and keep you.

Sincerely,

Kathy Snider



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcán Ministries provides a prayerful, pastoral presence through lay missionaries living in solidarity with the poor of the remote Ixcán jungle of Guatemala to learn from as well as to assist both spiritually and materially the people with whom life and ministry are shared. The organization strives to be a bridge between two cultures and nations allowing for the exchange of varying gifts between the rich and poor for the ultimate purpose of empowerment and transformation of lives and society.

Ixcán Ministries is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your contributions are tax deductible. You may contact us at:

Ixcán Ministries
PO Box 51
Mandan, ND 58554

Purchase Ixcán Creations products at:
Susie Q's 411 W. Main Mandan, ND
or on our webpage
ixcanministries.weebly.com

ixcan_ministries@yahoo.com
Marlane Peterson
(701) 663-3798